A Study of Spiritual Transformation and Self Discovery in the selected novels of Paulo Coelho

A Proposal for Topic Approval to be Submitted to the
University of Mumbai
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English
In the subject of Arts
(Humanities)

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Signature of the Student **Signature of Research Guide**

Proposal for Topic Approval to be submitted to the University of Mumbai for the PH.D. Degree in the subject of **English**.

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A Study of Spiritual Transformation and Self Discovery in the selected novels of Paulo Coelho

Introduction :

The topic of the proposed research work is 'A Study of Spiritual Transformation and Self Discovery in the selected novels of Paulo Coelho.'

Paulo Coelho is a Brazilian writer whose novels bring forth the side of spirituality that encompasses the whole universe. Spirituality is a path of life where one loses interest in the worldly affairs and moves towards eternal goals of one's life. Spirituality is essential for human beings in their daily routine life as it promotes harmony and peace, enhances knowledge and wisdom, improves tolerance and patience and most importantly defines purpose of life. It also helps to overcome attachment to this world and other life related issues. However for most of the people the path to such spirituality/spiritual transformation passes through struggles, suffering and it may also include experiences that are frightening, painful and have long lasting impact on their mind. 'Spirituality' means knowing that our lives have significance in a context beyond a mundane everyday existence. It means knowing the fact that we play a significant part of a purposeful unfolding of our life in our own way.

'Spirituality' is a state of mind that is obtained through experiences or according to the religious ideals. In simple words, spiritual people have achieved an extreme state of mind which goes beyond physical existence. This can be identified as a process of human transformation. It does not have any direct relation with the person's

outer appearance but it is the transformation of the inner self. Spiritual transformation is a process that leads to self discovery. Each and every person born in this world is in search of self identity. But self discovery is different from self identity. It is acquiring insights into one's principles, one's values, one's needs etc. It is a life-long sacred journey of exploration through our inner self, an attempt to find out who we are, what we are, our potentials, our purpose in life and also to know what principles guide us to take different paths along the way. It is discovering one's authentic self and experience.

Spiritual transformation and self discovery are significant things in human life. The novels of Paulo Coelho revolve around spirituality and particularly his 'The Alchemist' is mainly based on the theme of spirituality and self discovery. After reading this novel the researcher realized that these kinds of books give reader a whole new perspective of looking towards life. The present research proposes to assess Paulo Coelho's few selected novels that show the spiritual transformation in the protagonist and other characters. The novels show how the journey of life changed the characters' vision of life. So, the researcher came to the conclusion that 'A Study of Spiritual Transformation and Self Discovery in the selected novels of Paulo Coelho' will be the topic of her research proposal.

Importance of the theme and significance of the study :

'Spirituality' is a concept that seems to be neglected by mankind in recent times. As human beings have become more technologically and scientifically advanced, they have become more materialistic. There is a lot of chaos outside in the world and inside the human mind. It makes it difficult for the people to survive and live in

peace. We all need courage to fight chaos, violence and pain or an escape from it. That is the reason due to which many people are turning towards spirituality. It is something that goes beyond our mind, our ego and our physical existence. A spiritual mind gains peace even in the chaos that leads towards attaining harmony. A spiritual mind can experience positivity and bliss amid negativity and darkness. Peace of mind is required to let go the negativity that overshadows our thoughts and deprives of the happiness that we can have.

The believers of spirituality think that there is a higher power, something bigger and better that influence our existence. It changes our vision, attitude, aptitude and the way we perceive the world. Spirituality exists in different forms, for some it is an awareness of the present, for some it is an aspect of religion and tradition. It is something that reforms us and our mindset that is helpful in all aspect of life.

In today's world spirituality can heal our mind. Despite the scientific progress, advancement of technology and knowledge, human beings are facing depression, anxiety, stress and other conflicts of mind. The negativity that surrounds us creates many psychological problems that further can develop into serious diseases/issues.

We human beings are capable of creating a gentle, compassionate, happy, peaceful and meaningful life. The spiritual transformation helps people to find ways to meet life challenges and continue with peaceful lives. They always bounce back and carry on with their lives even while facing lot of difficulties. Self discovery through spiritual transformation is much needed for every individual to face different challenging devastating situations in life. In today's

world where people are losing their perspective towards life, were they have a lot of confusion about their existence and themselves, where there is a lot of chaos not only in the outer world but also inner world; spirituality can lead human beings towards self discovery and eternal peace. Paulo Coelho's novels and characters give a completely different perspective on spiritual growth through day to day life experiences or the incidences that take place in our lives.

Spirituality is the need of the hour to bring about a change in the miserable condition of the world and strengthen the will power among the people to fight what comes their way. His books have the power to influence and develop a deeper insight about life among readers.

Objectives of the Study :

The present research work aims to study the selected novels of Paulo Coelho who has beautifully portrayed the journey of spiritual transformation and self discovery of the protagonists in his novels.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To define the concept of 'Spirituality'.
- To understand the concept and importance of Self discovery.
- To study the life journey of the protagonists from Paulo Coelho's selected novels.
- To study the spiritual transformation and self discovery of the protagonists from the selected novels of Paulo Coelho.
- To study the importance of spiritual transformation for self identify through Paulo Coelho's novels.
- To trace the necessity of spiritual experience in one's life to recognize his/her true self.
- To understand the vision of the novelist regarding spiritual transformation and self discovery.

Conceptual frame work :

To facilitate the study in a better manner the researcher proposes to define and interpret various theoretical aspects of terms and concepts. These includes 'Spirituality', 'Spiritual transformation' and 'self discovery'.

The study of these terms will enable the researcher to delve into the theoretical considerations of the research problem and more importantly into the understanding of 'Spirituality', 'Spiritual transformation' and 'self discovery', its presentation and perception in the novels of Paulo Coelho.

'Spirituality is an inward journey that involves a shift in awareness rather than some form of external activity'.

'Spiritual transformation involves a fundamental change in a person's sacred and spiritual life. It is what happens when a human being evolves at the level of the soul. It can happen slowly throughout time and in an unexpected, fast and intense way'.

The next term is 'self discovery'. It is defined as the process of acquiring insight into one's own character. It is also called as an act or process of gaining knowledge or understanding of one's abilities, character and feelings. To arrive at the theoretical considerations of these concepts the researcher has applied textual, analytical, interpretative and evaluative methods.

Hypothesis :

The present research work aims at studying the spiritual transformation and self discovery seen in the protagonists from the selected novels of Paulo Coelho.

- The selected novels show spiritual transformation of the protagonist.

- The journey of the protagonist finally propagates towards self discovery.
- Spiritual transformation and self discovery lead towards eternal peace among protagonist.
- In all select texts author insists on the importance of spiritual transformation and self discovery.

Limitations of the study :

Paulo Coelho, a renowned author has written more than 30 books since 1974. The present study is limited only to the selected novels of Paulo Coelho.

The present research work will focus only on the below mentioned selected novels.

- *The Pilgrimage, (1987)*
- *The Alchemist, (1988)*
- *Brida (1990)*
- *The Valkyaries, (1992)*
- *Veronica Decides To Die, (1998)*
- *Eleven Minutes, (2003)*
- *Zahir, (2005)*

The present research will focus primarily on the thematic study i.e. Spiritual transformation and Self discovery of the selected novels.

This research will focus on the eternal peace achieved by the characters through spiritual transformation and self discovery.

Data collection and Methodology :

The present research is primarily library oriented. So library will be the main source of data. Articles, critical study, review on the selected novels will be studied to deepen the insight about the topic.

The original novels of Paulo Coelho will be the primary source of data. His interviews available on the internet can also be referred for this purpose.

Books related to the themes taken for the research i.e spirituality and self discovery; also articles, reviews, critical study, material available on internet, previous research, interviews on Paulo Coelho's work available on the internet will be the secondary sources for the study.

Literature Review :

Paulo Coelho is a popular Brazilian novelist on whose works a lot of research has already been done from different perspectives.

In the research paper 'Paulo Coelho's Philosophical Vision as Reflected in His Novels', Published in *The South Asian academic research chronicle, ISSN 2454-1109 Vol 2,* (7 July 2015), the author Vijay More underlines Coelho's simplicity and sublimity. He mentions that Paulo Coelho studies the ordinary worries of common man and gives suggestions that would provide peace, contentment and prosperity to human beings.

The Article 'Quest for the Fulfillment of Destiny : A Study on Santiago in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist'* written by M.Laxmi Manogna, Gomatam Mohana Charyulu, Kiran Kumar Guthikonda published in *International Journal of Computer Engineering in Research Trends 5 (1)* January 2018, the authors state that Paulo

Coelho's books have life enhancing impact on the readers. *The Alchemist* beautifully portrays spiritual journey of the protagonist and his profound vision developed towards the end.

In the research paper titled 'Behaviour changes in Paulo Coelho's *Veronika Decides to Die* : A Psychological Approach' by Bagas Suryo Prakoso and Resneri Daulay published in *Notion Journal of Linguistics Literature and Culture 2(2)* : 90 (November 2020), the author studies the main character of Veronika on the basis of social cognitive theory and bring forth the qualities of Veronika. Secondly, it shows how the environment can contribute to motivate the character to live a positive life with determination.

In the research paper 'Individuation in Paulo Coelho's *The Pilgrimage'* published by Ankita Desai and Usha Kaushik in *International journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities.* (Volume 7, Issue 8, August 2019), the authors focus on the message given by the book. The article shows how a new journey, though it seems difficult initially, unfolds many hidden aspects, teaches many lessons and helps to attain inner and outer peace.

All the previous research done on Paulo Coelho will be helpful in developing a broad perspective about his writing. Present research paper aims at focusing the 'Spiritual transformation' and 'self discovery' in Paulo Coelho's novels.

TENTATIVE SCHEME OF CHAPTERISATION :

Chapter I (A) : Introduction

This chapter will deal with the introduction of the novelist. In this chapter the details of life history of the novelist, his works, his achievements and awards received will be mentioned.

Chapter I (B) : The concept of Spirituality and Self Discovery

This chapter will focus on the themes like Spirituality, Spiritual transformation and Self discovery. Different definitions will be referred for the further progression of the thesis.

Chapter II : Quest for Self Discovery

This chapter will deal with the analysis of the following novels -

i) The Pilgrimage

ii) The Alchemist

Chapter III : Search for Peace and contentment

This chapter will deal with the analysis of the following novels -

i) The Valkyaries

ii) Zahir

Chapter IV : Journey of female characters towards spirituality

This chapter will deal with the analysis of the following novels -

i) Brida

ii) Veronica Decides To Die

iii) Eleven Minutes

Chapter V : A Comparative Study

This chapter will mention the comparative analysis of the selected novels.

Chapter VI : Conclusion

This chapter will consist of conclusions drawn from the analysis of the above novels.

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